

DMC Action Network eNews

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DMC Action Network

The DMC Action Network is a project of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's [Models for Change](#) initiative.

The Network aims to share knowledge and accelerate progress in the reduction of racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.

Dollars and Sense: How Sedgwick County, Kansas, Leverages Resources to Advance Reforms in Tough Economic Times

In November 2009, we described how the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority weathered severe budget cuts at the state level by closing correctional facilities and continuing to fund its community programs. This month, we look at how officials at the county level are stretching local dollars and identifying new sources of support for reforms targeted at reducing DMC.

Making juvenile justice a priority in the face of a budget deficit is no easy task. When dollars dry up, sustaining existing reforms - including those aimed at reducing racial and ethnic disparities - can pose significant challenges. And, for many state and local agencies, talk of implementing any new programs or initiatives grinds to a halt.

That may be the general rule, but Sedgwick County, Kansas, is the exception.



Budget cuts haven't stopped Sedgwick, a DMC Action Network partner site, from pursuing plans to better meet the needs of youth and the community. Mark Masterson, director of the County's Department of Corrections, notes that creative thinking has helped his jurisdiction identify and devote funds to a number of new initiatives - initiatives that otherwise might have been put on hold given the current fiscal climate.

For example, Sedgwick has leveraged local, state, and federal funds to reverse an increase in the use of secure detention for youth who violate the terms of their probation. In May 2009, Masterson noted a new trend: a spike in admissions to detention, and a significant reduction in the average number of days youth spent locked up. "After digging deeper, I noticed that the change corresponded with a change in sentencing practices after two new juvenile judges came to the bench." Additional digging revealed that judges were sanctioning probation violators with multiple weekends in secure detention, feeling that there needed to be a sanction for poor school behavior without causing the youth to miss more school.

Fortunately, stakeholders in Sedgwick found just the solution after visiting Pierce County Juvenile Court in Tacoma, Washington, the following month. "With funding from the MacArthur Foundation, we were able to take a team of four, including a juvenile court judge, to Tacoma and spent two days learning about all aspects of the way that they do business," said Masterson. There, the group learned about a weekend alternative to detention for low-risk youth, which the group thought could meet the need in its jurisdiction. When the team returned to present the program to stakeholders during the County's monthly collaborative meeting on detention utilization, the judges indicated that they would use a program like the one in Tacoma if it existed in Sedgwick.

[Lisa Garry](#), DMC Policy Director for the Center for Children's Law and Policy, manages the DMC Action Network. [Travis Long](#), Project Coordinator, provides administrative and technical support to the Network.

Core States

Pennsylvania
Berks County
Philadelphia
Lancaster County

Illinois
Peoria

Louisiana
Jefferson Parish
Rapides Parish

Washington
Benton/Franklin Counties
Pierce County

Partner States

Maryland
Baltimore City
Baltimore County
Montgomery County
Prince George's County

Wisconsin
Rock County
Outagamie County
Kenosha County

Kansas
Sedgwick County
Seward County
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North Carolina
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With support from the stakeholders, Masterson turned to identifying funding for the program. "The timing was perfect. It gave the County the opportunity to leverage state, county, and federal dollars that came through the state at that time." Specifically, the County drew upon freed-up state prevention funds, county funding, and federal block grant funding to foot the bill for the program. By making use of an existing facility's gym and redirecting county employees to support the program, Sedgwick was able to open the doors to the alternative in January 2010 - just six months after seeing Tacoma's program in action. The program served 123 youth in its first six months, 33% of whom were African American and 25% of whom were Latino.

Sedgwick hasn't stopped there, though. Not only has the County found funds for new programming, it has also identified resources to support an ongoing collaboration to address the needs of children involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The County's presiding juvenile judge had established a multi-system team to investigate the complex needs of "crossover youth," whose cases come at a high cost to state and county agencies, as well as the region's private foster care contractor: approximately \$1.2 million annually for the 12 crossover youth studied by the team.

Masterson identified a program aimed at taking the team's thinking about service provision to the next level: [the Multi-System Integration Certificate Program for Public Sector Leaders at Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform](#). Knowing that improved service delivery would benefit youth of color in the County, he proposed devoting DMC Action Network funds, so long as a judge would attend and commit to implementing workable strategies that the group learned to improve care of these youth.

By pulling together additional money from the county, the district court, the foster care agency, a local business (Spirit Aerosystems), and scholarships from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the MacArthur Foundation, Sedgwick was able to send a multidisciplinary team of seven to the intensive, week-long institute in mid-July. The team included a state legislator and leader of the African-American Coalition, the director of children's mental health services, the presiding juvenile court judge, the representative of state social services, the permanency council and cross-systems team coordinator, the County's corrections and DMC project director, and a representative from the private foster care agency.

Masterson notes that bringing this group of policy-level representatives to the program was the "logical next step" in this area of the County's work: "The program gave us an opportunity to really focus on this issue and obtain great information from excellent presenters - information that will help us develop our system in Sedgwick."

According to Shay Bilchik, Director of the Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and former administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Sedgwick's team understood and embraced the program's philosophy. "This is an intensive experience. We use what the research tells us about cross-system youth to understand how to do a better job for these kids," said Bilchik. He described Sedgwick as a jurisdiction that is doing "remarkable work" with a "very impressive team that used its time to really dig into the instruction and probe the faculty."

The team is currently working on a capstone project, which will translate their experience at the program into action. School may be out for the summer, but officials in Sedgwick are hard at work finding innovative ways to fund improvements in their county.

Tell us how you're leveraging funds to support reform in your jurisdiction: email jszanyi@cclp.org.

We Want Your Feedback!

We want to hear from you about how we can improve the DMC Action Network eNews.

Help us ensure that the eNews is a valuable resource for your work by [clicking here and completing a short online survey.](#)

You can also contact us anytime with comments or suggestions at jszanyi@cclp.org or 202-637-0377 x108.

Jefferson Parish Children and Youth Planning Board Honored at National Juvenile Justice Network Annual Forum

On July 14, 2010, the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) honored the Jefferson Parish Children and Youth Planning Board with its Award for Leadership in Juvenile Justice Reform. Jefferson Parish is a DMC Action Network core site.

Roy Juncker, Director of the Jefferson Parish Department of Juvenile Services, accepted the award. In describing the Board's work, NJJN recognized the following accomplishments:

- Helping to implement a new risk assessment instrument, which has decreased detention rates;
- Revamping the Department's contracting process to include only evidence-based programs; and
- Spearheading efforts to gather more data on system-involved youth.

"The National Juvenile Justice Network is thrilled to be able to honor some of the change agents in Louisiana and Mississippi that have been instrumental in establishing policies that treat youth in conflict with the law in a fair and appropriate manner. Through this award, we hope to elevate their work so that others across the country can emulate their commitment and success," said Sarah Bryer, NJJN's Director.

You can download the full press release [by clicking this link.](#)

TA Tips: Practical Advice for Successful DMC Reduction

This section of our newsletter focuses on sharing strategies and insights that can help jurisdictions effectively and sustainably eliminate DMC in their juvenile justice systems.



This month's tip is to **find creative ways to fund new and existing programs aimed at reducing racial and ethnic disparities**. By leveraging existing funding streams and identifying nontraditional sources of money, jurisdictions can continue to tackle DMC in difficult financial times. That may mean taking the lead from Sedgwick County, Kansas, and reaching out to local businesses. The National Juvenile Justice Network has also published a new guide entitled [The Real Costs and Benefits of Change: Finding Opportunities for Reform During Difficult Fiscal Times](#), which offers guidance

on realigning and reducing spending without sacrificing effective programs, as well as using the current budget crisis as a means to leverage deinstitutionalization.

If you have a tip you would like to share, or if you would like to hear more about a particular topic, let us know: email jszanyi@cclp.org.

The Newest DMC and Juvenile Justice Resources

- The Sentencing Project, a national organization working for a fair and effective criminal justice system by promoting reforms in sentencing law and alternatives to incarceration, has [launched a new juvenile justice resource page](#). The resource contains information and analysis on a broad range of issues, including the overrepresentation of youth of color.
- The newest issue of the *New York Law School Law Review* features a symposium on issues related to the school-to-prison pipeline. The [journal issue](#) addresses a number of individual topics, including [the disparate treatment of youth of color by school disciplinary systems](#), [the needs of status offenders with education-related disabilities](#), and [the role of law enforcement in an academic setting](#).
- The latest issue of *Juvenile and Family Justice TODAY* magazine features a new article on status offenders, entitled [Improving Outcomes for Status Offenders in the JJDPA Reauthorization](#). The publication, written by Nancy Gannon Hornberger, Executive Director of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, focuses on the history and current status of the JJDPA, the valid court order exception and ongoing efforts to reduce institutionalization of status offenders, and examples of best practices to meet the needs of status offenders.
- The National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) issued a new report that offers guidance for juvenile justice advocates whose states are facing budget shortfalls. The paper, entitled [The Real Costs and Benefits of Change: Finding Opportunities for Reform During Difficult Fiscal Times](#), details two core recommendations to encourage wise and effective juvenile justice spending: realigning and reducing spending without sacrificing effective programs, and using the current budget crisis as a means to leverage deinstitutionalization.
- The National Center for Juvenile Justice has released a summary of the delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts each year throughout the country. The report, entitled [Juvenile Court Statistics 2006-07](#), outlines trends in delinquency cases processed by juvenile courts between 1985 and 2007 and status offense cases handled between 1995 and 2007. The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has published brief fact sheets summarizing data on individual topics, including [cases waived to adult court](#), [probation caseloads](#), and [offenses against persons](#).

The *DMC eNews* reports on efforts to reduce disproportionate minority contact in juvenile justice systems in the [DMC Action Network](#). [Lisa Garry](#), DMC Policy Director for the Center for Children's Law and Policy, manages the DMC Action Network. For a PDF version of this newsletter, [click here](#). You can also contact us anytime with comments or suggestions at jszanyi@cclp.org or 202-637-0377 x108.